

23 July 2010

Secretary Ian Bowles
Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs, MEPA Office
Attn: Holly Johnson, MEPA Analyst,
100 Cambridge Street, Suite 900, Boston, MA 02114 Fax: 617-626-1181
Delivered via Adobe PDF to Holly.S.Johnson@state.ma.us

Re: EEA #13886 Green Line Extension FEIR

Dear Secretary Ian Bowles:

LivableStreets Alliance would like to take this opportunity to provide comments on the Final Environmental Impact Report (FEIR) for the Green Line Extension (GLX) Project. We would first like to applaud the efforts of EOE, MassDOT, and other agencies to keep this project moving steadily towards completion. Without a doubt, the Green Line Extension and Community Path Extension alongside will have enormous benefits to the mobility, health, and environment for those who live, work, or visit Somerville and Medford.

We are disappointed that the Green Line Extension is now planned in two phases, with the first phase to only extend as far as College Ave. We understand the financial and logistical challenges of completing the project in time to meet the legal deadline at which Medford Hillside must be served. However, we ask you to state in your certificate for the FEIR that MassDOT should continue with all due haste to complete the project to its intended terminus of Route 16, ideally within one year of the completion of Phase I. This final leg is essential, most importantly for the increased environmental benefits that will be gained by the additional population that will be served, but also to take the burden off of the neighborhood around College Ave of being a temporary terminus.

We also urge you to state in your certificate that the infrastructure for the Community Path Extension should be included as part of the GLX project, including design, construction, and funding all the way to Lechmere, even while full funding from other sources is still being identified. More specifically, we urge you to require that MassDOT:

1. Design the Path to reach all the way to Lechmere/North Point - through the Somerville Environmental Justice neighborhoods of Winter Hill and East Somerville - and not just to Inner Belt (as stated in the FEIR).
2. Make the commitment that the Community Path extension is part of the Green Line project even while full funding is still being identified.
3. Include the costs for the construction of the Community Path extension infrastructure components in the planned Design/Build Contract and in the funding applications for the Green Line Extension to Lechmere, such as FTA's New Starts. We appreciate that MassDOT is considering including partial Path infrastructure as part of the GLX project - a very significant move - though we await an official commitment.
4. Co-sponsor or at least support the Tiger II grant application with the City of Somerville to fund the remaining Community Path elements of the GLX and help fund the 20% match. (Final application is due August 23)
5. Continue to work with Somerville to apply for other funds for Community Path construction such as the proposed Active Community Transportation Act of 2010, House Bill 4722.

Your continued support of the Path will build on the vision of the Southwest Corridor Park and will increase Green Line ridership at a low per rider cost. This has been demonstrated by the success of the existing Community Path in Cambridge and Somerville that brings thousands of residents to the Davis Square Red Line Station where boardings are almost double what were originally projected. The Community Path Extension will be a critical zero-emissions-transportation link that will offer great environmental, health, safety, noise-reduction, and community benefits to Somerville -- and, moreover, to the region.

Furthermore, the Community Path Extension will complete a (now missing) link that will connect some ~40 regional miles of path, finally linking the Minuteman Trail with the Charles River Paths, and all of their offshoots. These paths reach through Bedford, Lexington, Arlington, Cambridge, Somerville, Boston, and Medford to the Red and Green Lines (in Cambridge and Somerville) and to Boston, Waltham, and Watertown, and the Charles River paths. This will dramatically increase opportunities for bicycle tourism through all of these cities and towns. The Path will also be the eastern end of the 104-mile cross-state Mass Central Rail Trail to Northampton.

Thank you very much for your consideration of this public comment. Please feel free to contact us with any questions or comments. My e-mail address is charlie@livablestreets.info and my cell phone number is 617-852-6125.

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Sincerely,

Charlie Denison

Charlie Denison
Board of Directors
LivableStreets Alliance

CC:

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